

EGYPTIAN DENIES SPYING FOR C.I.A.

But Editor Pleads Guilty to
Smuggling Funds Abroad

By HEDRICK SMITH

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CAIRO, Dec. 28—Mustafa Amin, a dominant figure in the Cairo press until his arrest five months ago, pleaded not guilty in a military court today to charges of having spied for the United States Central Intelligence Agency.

But the 51-year-old newspaper editor and publisher, known for his pro-Western and anti-Communist sentiments, pleaded guilty to two lesser charges of having illegally smuggled 20,000 Egyptian pounds (\$46,000) abroad through foreign contacts.

The state has demanded the death penalty on the espionage charge. The smuggling charges carry a maximum penalty of five years each.

Mr. Amin's long-awaited trial began with a brief public session this morning and, after the opening proceedings, went quickly into closed session, where the prosecution began its case.

Defense Agrees to Shift

The state prosecutor said that a closed hearing was necessary because national defense secrets were involved, and the defense attorneys agreed to the move.

Neither the United States, the C.I.A. nor Bruce T. Odell, former American Embassy attaché named by authorities of the United Arab Republic as Mr. Amin's C.I.A. contact, was mentioned during the 15 minutes of the public session.

The trial comes at an awkward moment for Washington. The embassy here is winding up negotiations for a \$55-million aid agreement with Cairo. The agreement is expected to be signed presently barring unexpected complications.

The embassy has formally taken a hands-off approach toward the trial and spokesmen have denied reports that the embassy has intervened in any way. Reliable informants reported, however, that United States officials conveyed to the Egyptians the view that Washington would be happy if the trial were played down.

Mr. Amin, jailed in July after

having been arrested while lunching in Alexandria with Mr. Odell, looked healthy and composed. He appeared to have lost some weight and to have given up chain smoking.

Mr. Amin spoke firmly and confidently in court. Asked whether he had any objection to the composition of the court of three senior army officers named to try him, he replied: "Because I am innocent, I welcome any court." A few moments later he entered his formal pleas.

The state prosecutor, Salah Nassar, said that Mr. Amin had "communicated to a foreign state military, political, economic and diplomatic secrets that he was able to obtain through his personal contacts and as editor of Al Akhbar," a Cairo newspaper.

He also accused Mr. Amin of having falsely told a foreign agent that he regularly saw President Gamal Abdel Nasser and that the President gave him briefings on state secrets and political and economic trends.

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